



**Statement of Tadesse Teklebrehan, Chair of the Eritrean Human
Rights Defenders**

**Attack on Human Rights of Eritrean Asylum-seekers in Eritrea by
the Eritrean regime**

European Parliament Roundtable on Eritrea

25 October 2023

I would like to thank MEP Langensiepen and the European External Programme with Africa for inviting me to speak here today.

All protocol observed.

My Name is Tadesse Teklebrehan, I am the Chair of the Eritrean Human Rights defenders.

I will focus on the urgent action needed in addressing human rights violations by the Eritrean regime on European soil.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are all aware of the alarming situation involving the totalitarian regime in Eritrea and its widespread violation of human rights. The abuses and oppressions inflicted upon the

Eritrean citizens have been extensively documented and acknowledged by numerous international newspapers, human rights organizations as well as Eritrean opposition groups in the diaspora.

In particular, the 600-page report published 2016 by the UN Special Commission of Inquiry into the human rights situation in Eritrea serves as a testament to the grave violations and crimes against humanity committed by the Eritrean regime. The report specifically states that Eritrean embassies abroad are reported to be recruiting spies for diaspora surveillance and exercising pressure on Eritreans in exile to either support the regime or remain silent.

Despite consistent reports from the UN special rapporteur on Eritrea, the EU and the international community at large have failed to take substantial punitive action, leaving the victims of these abuses without justice.

The impact on of the EU and the international community has become even more prominent following the 2020 peace agreements between the new government of PM Abiy Ahmed in Ethiopia and Eritrea, which aimed to end the hostilities between the two countries.

Regrettably, the regime of Isaias Afwerki continued its oppressive practices in the country and outside.

It has committed gross violations of human rights, including war crimes and acts of genocide in the Tigray region of Ethiopia together with the Ethiopian armed forces and other armed groups. The International Commission of Human Rights on Ethiopia has documented these atrocities.

The EU and the UN have neglected their responsibility to scrutinize these grave violations and by lowering the bar of accountability for Ethiopia and for Eritrea for that matter, when they failed to renew the commission's mandate.

It is disheartening but not surprising, to note that the Eritrean government persists in harassing, threatening Eritreans abroad, and imposing a 2% tax on the gross income of its exiles. The reports of physical abuse, money laundering, illegal money transactions, and the sale of illicit spirits during exiled-organized festivals in Europe, organized with the active support of Eritrean embassies in European countries, are deeply concerning. These festivals aim to glorify the Eritrean regime, collect funds, falsely showcase international support, and intimidate Eritreans who fled their homeland.

Many Eritrean refugees, who have experienced the cruelty and oppression of the regime firsthand, are frustrated and perplexed by the fact that Europe is being exploited as a platform for illegitimate activities by one of the world's most hardened dictatorships. This issue not only provokes and oppresses the victims but also poses a threat to fundamental freedoms, European democracy, and the integration policies of national governments. Additionally, the presence and activities of Eritrean regime spies - freely roaming in Western countries, pose a potential threat to national security.

In light of these grave concerns, the Eritrean Human Rights defenders implore the EU to take immediate action to halt the human rights violations committed by the Eritrean regime on European soil.

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It is crucial that those responsible for these gross violations, including many Eritrean ministers, governors and generals, who represent the Eritrean regime and who themselves have transferred their families to European countries as political refugees, are thoroughly investigated and held accountable for their actions.

The Eritrean Human Rights Defenders, pledge to work with you and the EU authorities, to address the urgent matter of upholding human rights in Eritrea and for Eritrean asylum seekers in Europe and to ensure democracy in Europe is not undermined.

With your support, we can strive to put an end to the suffering of Eritrean refugees in Europe and ensure that Europe remains a safe haven for those seeking refuge, free from the influence of the oppressive Eritrean regime.

Thank you for your attention.

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